

CONTENTS

	<u>PAGE No</u>
TITLE PAGE	1
INTRODUCTION	2
QUESTIONS	3 - 10
LIST OF IMAGES	11 - 12
IMAGES	13 - 21
ORIGINAL PROPOSAL	22 - 23
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	24
BIBLIOGRAPHY	25

THE AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL UNIVERSITY

INSTITUTE OF THE ARTS



CANBERRA SCHOOL OF ART

GRADUATE DIPLOMA OF ART

1992

GERALD S JONES

R E P O R T

PRESENTED IN FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS

OF THE

GRADUATE DIPLOMA OF ART

REPORT

INTRODUCTION

This year has been a time for me to reassess my painting skills and concepts. It has been a year of questioning, thus this **REPORT** is constructed with questions and answers. (It is written as a self-interview). The questions used in the **REPORT** are questions which have re-occurred in my mind during the Course and, I believe, required answers.

The order of the questions contained in the **REPORT** are as follows -

QUESTION 1: WHY DID YOU WANT TO DO A POST-GRAD YEAR?

QUESTION 2: HOW DID YOUR AIMS AND INTERESTS CHANGE DURING THE COURSE OF THE YEAR?

QUESTION 3: HOW HAS YOUR WORK DEVELOPED TECHNICALLY?

HOW DID YOU FIND THE TRANSITION FROM SMALL TO LARGE SCALE PAINTINGS?

QUESTION 4: WHO HAVE BEEN THE ARTISTS WHO HAVE BEEN IMPORTANT INFLUENCES ON YOUR DEVELOPMENT?

QUESTION 5: HOW IS ROMANTICISM A MAJOR INFLUENCE ON YOUR WORK?

QUESTION 6: WHAT HAVE BEEN THE BENEFITS OF YOUR POST-GRADUATE EXPERIENCE?

HOW HAVE YOU FELT ABOUT THE FEEDBACK YOU'VE RECEIVED? DO YOU THINK DIFFERENTLY ABOUT YOUR WORK AS A RESULT?

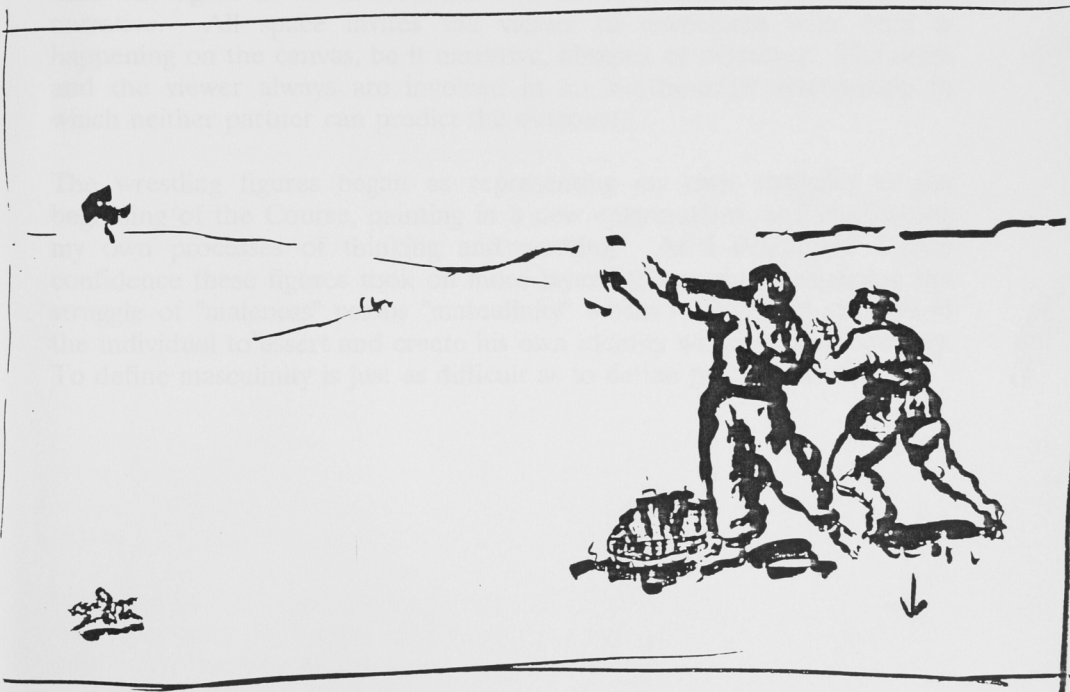
QUESTION 7: WHERE DO YOU SEE YOUR WORK GOING FROM HERE?

QUESTION 1

WHY DID YOU WANT TO DO A POST-GRAD YEAR?

The main focus in my decision for doing a Post-Grad (Studio Practice) was to extend my technical skills in paint, to expand the critical input into my work, and to extend my interaction with other students and Lecturers.

I also felt that my work was at a stage of becoming too safe or "precious", and I wanted to expand my concepts. This Course enabled me to take full advantage of the facilities of the Institute (especially the Library, Lecturers and interaction of Artists in Residence). It was also a time to consolidate my thoughts (by giving and attending seminars) and to open myself to different ways of viewing my work.



QUESTION 2

HOW DID YOUR AIMS AND INTERESTS CHANGE DURING THE COURSE OF THE YEAR?

The developing twelve months have enabled me to focus on my work technically and conceptually.

My works prior to this year were dealing with isolation. By this I mean the alienation one feels living in an artificial environment like Canberra, where European culture has been imposed on the Australian landscape.

In these paintings I was working with isolated individual figures searching for traces of a European heritage in the local landscape. My more recent works deal with the interaction of figures within space. By placing more than one figure in an environment the viewer is able to create his own narrative. All space invites the viewer to participate with what is happening on the canvas, be it narrative, abstract or whatever. The artist and the viewer always are involved in an 'on-the-edge' relationship in which neither partner can predict the outcome.

The wrestling figures began as representing my own struggles at the beginning of the Course, painting in a new environment, and challenging my own processes of thinking and working. As I developed a new confidence these figures took on more layers of meaning - reflecting the struggle of "maleness" versus "masculinity" within society, the struggle of the individual to assert and create his own identity within pluralist society. To define masculinity is just as difficult as to define post-modernism.

QUESTION 3

HOW HAS YOUR WORK DEVELOPED TECHNICALLY?

Another aspect which developed since doing this Course is paint quality. The paint has become more vigorous, more fluid and less descriptive, thus reinforcing the fresher gestures of the figures. I am now using arid ground which plays a greater role in the formal configuration than the colour did in my earlier work. It is no longer a device but an integrated formal element. The heavy glazes are a mixture of ivory, black and cadmium yellow which forms a luminescent green.

HOW DID YOU FIND THE TRANSITION FROM SMALL TO LARGE SCALE PAINTINGS?

When I was working from small to large I found the transition. Rather than treating each scale individually, I originally approached them technically the same. I began with each scale the appropriate size brushes for the small works - small brushes and so on.

When working on a large scale I had more problems to deal with. Firstly, the overall size of the canvas was the beginning of the problem. It was a surface that had to be filled. How was I going to fill it? I began by building up the surface in layers of glazes so it would be less daunting to approach physically.

Then I looked at the looseness of the brush works on the small scale and attempted to transpose this to a large scale. After several attempts at loosening the brush strokes I decided to scale up. By doing this I learned that each painting adopted its own identity. So, in a way, by using this method I learned each scale has its own individuality.

In the first of the large paintings I felt the figures were large and centred. I felt they were in danger of becoming mannered and compositionally "safe". To break out of that mould involved a re-learning of the structures of painting. The figures became smaller in scale, more intimate and less confronting.

Technically I learned that I had great sensitivity with paint - it seduced

me. I began dealing with actual physical qualities of the glazes I was using. The character of the glazes became an important part of each work. At the same time I began to apply paint with more vigour and less attention to "finish".



QUESTION 4

WHO HAVE BEEN THE ARTISTS WHO HAVE BEEN IMPORTANT INFLUENCES ON YOUR DEVELOPMENT?

Where does an artist begin with the artists who have had an influence on his work? They influence for a variety of different reasons. I will begin with artists of the past like Delacroix - for his dramatic action and the dynamism of the figures in their interaction within the space compositionally (in particular, his sketches for the gesture of line); Gericault - for his representation of the animal brutality of man. "Gericault only believed that the body is alive if it is somehow stretched to its limits"¹; Goya - for his use of colour, the opposing complementaries creating the drama, and the looseness of the brushwork.

Some contemporary artists whose work I admire are Chia - for the robustness of his figures and his sculptural qualities in paint; Garouste - for the fluidity of the figures and the slight distortions he creates; Mariani - for his layering of space. Looking at each of these artists, questions arise about the narrative content. Does personal allegory have relevance beyond the individual who expresses it? It is as Jencks said "the subject matter of this paradoxical genre....(is) a narrative without a plot."² By this, the meaning for the artist is personal and will remain personal, but the meaning for the viewer is an open issue. The viewer will bring his/her own experience (in the broader sense) to each work of art.

1. WALTERS, Margaret, THE NUDE MALE - A NEW PERSPECTIVE, Great Britain, 1978, p 234.
2. JENCKS, Charles, POST-MODERNISM - THE NEW CLASSICISM IN ART AND ARCHITECTURE, New York, 1987, p338.

QUESTION 5

HOW IS ROMANTICISM A MAJOR INFLUENCE ON YOUR WORK?

An important part of the romantic sensibility seems to be about a search for one's own identity through reference to historic traditions - like Claude Lorraine who sought out his own heritage in the classical ruins of Italy.

In his essay "Romanticism and Retrospection" Robert Rosenblum talks about how today this "tradition of ruins has had a new lease of life"³ but how now it is "done with a kind of quotation or a kind of chic irony about an earlier way of feeling or seeing."⁴

Whereas in my earlier work the romantic landscape seemed recreated by description, in these later paintings I am extracting from the romantic tradition essential qualities of colour, light and fluidity of gesture, evoking an atmosphere or mood of this era.

3 & 4. PAPADAKIS, Andreas (ed), THE NEW ROMANTICS, Art and Design, London, 1988, pp 7-16.

QUESTION 6

WHAT HAVE BEEN THE BENEFITS OF YOUR POST-GRADUATE EXPERIENCE?

HOW HAVE YOU FELT ABOUT THE FEEDBACK YOU'VE RECEIVED? DO YOU THINK DIFFERENTLY ABOUT YOUR WORK AS A RESULT?

This year has enabled me to focus on my work and have interaction with Lecturers and students, receiving criticism. At the beginning of the year I found the feedback I was getting was pretty confronting, but this enabled me to critically re-evaluate my thoughts and question the responses to my work and my own responses to that feedback. Through discussion and reviews I came to question my own subconscious or intuitive processes.

I do not feel differently about my work. I just feel differently about my way of dealing with it conceptually. I am thinking about it with greater clarity in terms of extracting the essence of those historical influences and this has given me a new confidence where I can now play with the elements of painting itself in new ways.



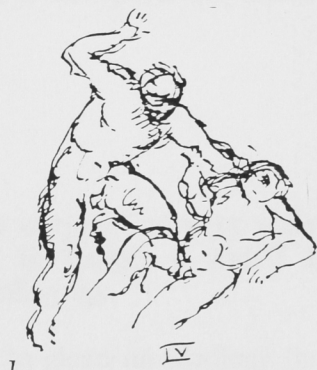
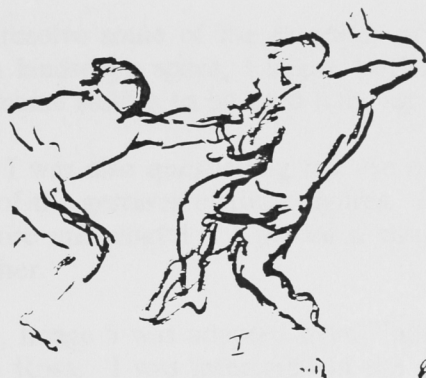
QUESTION 7

WHERE DO YOU SEE YOUR WORK GOING FROM HERE?

I intend to continue reassessing my process of working, exploring the formal devices of composition and space and the rendering of paint.

Currently I am more interested in using sketches and notebooks as sources and integrating the processes of drawing and painting.

Over the next few months I will be developing this new body of work to be shown in Sydney later in the year.



LIST OF IMAGES

IMAGES - 1; 2

During the beginning of the year I began experimenting with my skills in paint. Seeing my main focus in my work was figure, I began with these imaginary portraits whilst referring to artists like Ingres and Goya and interpreting their work compositionally and technically.

By limiting the palette I was able to focus on these elements. I also was interested in the fluidity and gesture of paint to reinforce the drama. In a way I was loosening up before starting on the main core of my work.

IMAGES - 3; 4; 5

In order to resolve some of the problems of working with narratives of the figure in landscape space, I began working on small wooden panels and some became studies to be used later for large works.

At this time I was also questioning the use of the solitary figure and the significance of the gestures of these figures. I realised that these gestures would be more meaningful if I placed a couple of figures in interaction with each other.

In particular, Image 5 was adapted from "Jacob wrestling with the Angel" by Salvatore Rosa. I was interested in the narrative and what it meant for me. I saw the struggle with the Angel as a metaphor for man's struggle with his own mortality.

IMAGES 6; 7

With reference to my original proposal, I began working in larger scale which created a problem for me; therefore, in Images 6 and 7 I overcame some of those technical problems by scaling up.

Thus, by working from small to large I was able to glean an ideology (in particular, this painting is about appropriation) about the works. The buildings represented to me those ideas. Whilst one figure is picking up those thoughts, the other drops them, thus creating my own mythology.

IMAGES - 8; 9

These larger works allowed me to explore the expressive potential of gesture and the substance of paint itself.

The larger works also engaged the full body of both the painter and the viewer.

The image of the figures wrestling inspired me to look at the photographic sequences of Muybridge to reinforce the tension anatomically as expressed in the figures.

Because the main focus of my work was the wrestling figures, the landscape (horizon line, etc) became less descriptive and took on a greater metaphoric role.

IMAGES - 10; 11; 12

In the more recent work the horizon line and conventional perspective disappeared and I began to place the figures in a more modernist picture plane. This opens the images up to the possibility of more layers of meaning.

The wrestling became a more universal metaphor for the bouts of conflict between men, and symbolic of man "as a victim of his own passions".⁵

In these images the conflict is "stripped back" to its most basic elements. It may be a game, a sport or a war, or the physical representation of emotional or psychological conflict.

5. WALTERS, Margaret, THE NUDE MAIL - A NEW PERSPECTIVE, Great Britain, 1978, p233.



Image ~ 1



Image ~ 2



Image ~ 3



Image ~ 4 ; 5.



Image ~ 6; 7



Image ~ 8.



Image ~ 9



Image ~ 10, 11



Image ~ 12.

STUDY PROPOSAL

GRADUATE DIPLOMA (STUDIO PRACTICE)

Since graduating from the Graphic Investigation Workshop of the School of Art my practice has been (almost) exclusively involved in painting and, despite some success in this field, I feel that twelve months' concentrated study in the Painting Workshop will be of enormous benefit to me.

I have been fortunate in obtaining a studio space (at Kingston Art Space) and in the period of my tenure there (since the end of 1986) I have concentrated on developing and expanding my practice as a painter.

After leaving the Canberra School of Art I realised the need for colour to expand the historical references in my work. The logical approach was to move from a graphic medium to a painterly one, and I have maintained that approach for some time.

In terms of my Graduate Diploma Study Proposal, my aim is to produce an exhibition of twelve large canvasses and a substantial body of related works - drawings and works on paper - which may or may not be "studies" for the larger works.

Theoretically I wish to explore the "landscape" and the "figure in the landscape" as materialised (i.e. landscape as seen) and as theorised (i.e. as pictured by other artists (historical or contemporary)).

Historically the starting point for this will be broadly based on the "Romantic landscape" of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

Artists whom I will be looking at include Gericault, Delacroix, Turner and (some of) their sources - Claude, Rubens, Rembrandt and Van Dyck.

More contemporary artists will include De Chirico, Garouste, Paladino, Le Brun, Chia and Mariani. All of the latter are artists whose work reflects an intense interest in the art of the "Classic/Romantic" era.

All of the above will be seen and interpreted in terms of my own practice, my own environment and my own interpretation and understanding of historical and contemporary practice.

The primary and secondary material for this project is abundant, and those resources available to students as outlined in the Graduate Studies booklet will be fully utilised, as well as the experience of my recent overseas trip which incorporated the United States of America, the United Kingdom and Europe. My notebook from this trip will be a major and immediate personal resource.

GERALD S JONES



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many thanks to the people who helped me through the year with their encouragement and support.

Special thanks to my supervisor, Ruth Waller, Bob Boynes and, especially, my family and friends for putting up with my stress.

GERALD S JONES

BIBLIOGRAPHY

HONNEF, Klaus, CONTEMPORARY ART, Germany, 1988, pp 86-105.

HUGHES, Robert, NOTHING IF NOT CRITICAL, London, 1990, pp 50-63; pp 294-295.

JENCKS, Charles, POST-MODERNISM - THE NEW CLASSICISM IN ART AND ARCHITECTURE, New York, 1987, pp 338-340.

JENCKS, Charles, WHAT IS POST-MODERNISM?, New York, 1987, pp 22-25.

NAIRNE, Sandy, STATE OF THE ART, IDEAS AND IMAGES IN THE 1980s, London, 1987, pp 27-33.

PAPADAKIS, Andreas (ed), THE CLASSICAL SENSIBILITY IN CONTEMPORARY PAINTING AND SCULPTURE, Art and Design Vol 4, Nos 5/6, 1988, Academy Editions, London, 1988.

PAPADAKIS, Andreas (ed), THE NEW ROMANTICS, Art and Design Vol 4, Nos 11/12, 1988, Academy Editions, London, 1988.

PAPADAKIS, Andreas (ed), ITALIAN ART NOW, Art and Design Vol 5, Nos 1/2, 1989, Academy Editions, London, 1989.

WALTERS, Margaret, THE NUDE MALE - A NEW PERSPECTIVE, Great Britain, 1978, pp 232-235.